

## **North Carolina Juvenile Reentry Reform**

### **Council of State Governments' Key Findings in North Carolina**

The Council of State Governments (CSG) submitted their initial site visit findings to North Carolina on May 18, 2015. The juvenile justice management team met as a group to discuss the findings on Tuesday, May 19, 2015. A conference call between North Carolina and CSG policy analysts on May 21, 2015 helped to clarify some of the findings. A mutual decision was made to revise the document to reflect CSG's findings that accurately identify which juvenile justice processes and policies could be best improved upon with the recommendations of the implementation grant. This revised set of findings is below.

- 1. CSG Finding:** Agencies and staff within facilities and the community are not fully coordinating around case planning and service matching so that youth's reentry needs are being met in a timely and appropriate manner back in the community.

**CSG Recommendation:** Develop a standardized case plan template and process across all juvenile justice to ensure youth get services matched to their risk level and key needs in the placement setting and community. Ensure all youth with mental health and substance use needs receive the intended intensity and dosage of services and supports upon return to the community and remain in services for the intended duration.

**DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ plans to fully develop and implement the comprehensive service plan model to guide appropriate service matching and document accountability of stakeholders through the juvenile justice process, including reentry (Year 1).
- 2. CSG Finding:** The quality of Juvenile Court Counselors' interactions with youth varies, such that some take on the role of case managers and promoting positive behavior change, while others are more focused on surveillance and monitoring the conditions of supervision.

**CSG Recommendation:** Develop a more effective and consistent supervision practice model. Provide training and supports to all Juvenile Court Counselors on effective case management practice for all youth, as well as motivational interviewing and effective family engagement.

**DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ plans to train all Juvenile Court Counselors on the use of the comprehensive service plan, effective service matching, and motivational interviewing (Year 1).
- 3. CSG Finding:** There are gaps and inconsistencies in the use of North Carolina's Risk and Needs assessments in driving case planning, service decisions, and supervision/aftercare.

While a case plan is begun for every youth at intake, these plans are not consistently shared and utilized across staff located in YDCs and other residential placement settings as well as across community service providers.

**CSG Recommendation:** Juvenile Court Counselors should coordinate with facility staff and service providers to develop comprehensive service planning prior to the youth's release and ensure youth are appropriately matched to services in the community based on youth needs.

**DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ's current Risk and Needs assessments are designed to assist decision making at disposition. DACJJ plans to develop or adapt a tool with dynamic risk and needs factors that will facilitate service planning, treatment goal setting, release planning, and reentry decisions (Year 1).

4. **CSG Finding:** The Department needs to develop tools to guide length of stay or reentry decisions.

**CSG Recommendation:** Develop a structured decision matrix to inform length of stay decisions that incorporates risk while also considering a number of other factors.

**DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ's current Risk Assessment tool is designed to be utilized as a tool for predicting risk for recidivism and aide in decision making at disposition. DACJJ plans to develop or adapt a tool with dynamic risk and needs factors that will allow us to better guide release planning (Year 1).

5. **CSG Finding:** While the North Carolina Risk and Needs assessments identify youth's risk for reoffending and criminogenic needs, this risk assessment tool has not recently been re-normed.

**CSG Recommendation:** The North Carolina Risk Assessment tool should be re-normed.

**DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ plans to re-norm the risk assessment to better assess risk levels of juvenile justice-involved youths. (Year 2)

6. **CSG Finding:** Youth do not have sufficient job readiness/training while in YDCs and residential placements, as well as employment/vocational training opportunities in the communities to which they return.

**CSG Recommendation:** Develop a full range of educational and workforce development opportunities for youth in facilities and in the community.

**DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ is working to increase job readiness activities and vocational interest assessments for youth in placement. DACJJ is working to increase the involvement and improving partnerships with community colleges and the local business community. This will aide in the provision of training and employment. DACJJ plans to increase job training and employment opportunities, and increase the development and use of transitional housing (Year 1).

7. **CSG Finding:** There is a practice of automatically enrolling youth in alternative school settings, as opposed to educational/vocational settings that best meet the needs of youth. This is not a legislative mandate, but rather, something that happens regularly in practice. **CSG Recommendation:** Ensure that youth are promptly re-enrolled in school upon release, and that education placement decisions are based on the needs and goals of the student. Youth should not be automatically enrolled in an alternative school program, and every effort should be made to place a youth in a community school setting as appropriate. **DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ will develop a systematic process for collaborating with local school districts across the state on public school reentry and communicate this process to local school superintendents. We will arrange dialogue with school superintendents or their designees on how to best enact a review of each returning student's needs and appropriate placement. The comprehensive service plan will also address identified educational planning needs.
8. **CSG Finding:** Family engagement practices and strategies are inconsistent across placement settings. **CSG Recommendation:** Develop formalized tools, resources, and supports for families of youth in YDCs and other residential placement settings. **DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ plans to examine ways to use technology to engage parents, survey parents to assess satisfaction and engagement, and train our staff on a parent engagement curriculum to enhance engagement efforts and practice (Year 1).
9. **CSG Finding:** DACJJ has not established clear performance measures around family engagement or determined what data it will collect to measure and assess the quality of family engagement on an ongoing basis. **CSG Recommendation:** Establish clear performance measures for family engagement across DACJJ, as well as policies and procedures describing how this data will be collected, stored electronically, and analyzed to assess the quality of family engagement and impact on youth outcomes. **DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** DACJJ will review current family engagement data from short-term residential and annually conducted YDC parent satisfaction surveys. The Task Force's Family Engagement subgroup will continue to develop surveys to better understand how DACJJ can serve parents not only at reentry but along the juvenile justice continuum (Year 1).

10. **CSG Finding:** While DACJJ collects recidivism and other youth outcome data, it is not tracking the full range of youth’s educational, employment, and behavioral health progress and status beyond a 12-month time period.

**CSG Recommendation:** Collect key reentry performance and quality assurance measures and connect recidivism data to other youth outcome data that include education, employment, and behavioral health.

**DACJJ Proposed Action Step:** To track outcomes for youth, DACJJ proposes to work with the North Carolina Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC), a data integration and business intelligence program developed as a public-private partnership between North Carolina State Government and SAS. The GDAC compiles a wide range of government agency data, and supports analysis of these data to improve service and operations. The GDAC offers DACJJ the ability to access data to track outcomes related to recidivism, employment, and education. The GDAC may also be a source of data to track outcomes on behavioral health service receipt and outcomes (Year 1).